

# "HEAR YE HIM"

## A Devotional Series For Radio

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Evan A. Fry, Radio Minister  
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The Sermon: YE ARE THE BODY OF CHRIST

Scripture: I Corinthians 12:12-28, 28.

For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were the hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.....And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.

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Ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

Of all the several symbols used in the New Testament to illustrate the close union of Christ and the Church, none presents more interesting possibilities nor more related analogies than the figure of the church as the body of Christ.

Everything that exists in our universe must have some kind of organization. Without organization it could not exist. Even the tiny atom, which is the building block of which all matter is made, consists of an organization of protons, neutrons, and electrons, arranged in specific functional relationship to each other. Even the most simple structure or organism demands not only an accumulation of material or parts, but an arrangement of those parts in specific functional relationship with each other.

Proper organization is always essential to proper function. Even so simple a mechanism as a pair of scissors will not function unless the two cutting blades and the connecting bolt are put together in proper functional relationship to each other. Turn one blade backwards or upside down, or loosen the bolt a little too much, and the scissors will not cut. A handful of loose watch parts do not make a watch, unless the parts are organized in functional relationship with each other. A collected mass of cells does not make a human body, unless those cells are organized in functional rela-

tionship to each other. A loose association, or a simple gathering together of the "believers in Christ" does not make Christ's church, unless all the proper members and officers are there, organized, enlivened by the Spirit of Christ, and working in proper functional relationship with each other.

A second point to note in consideration of the church as the body of Christ is that in the body there is always unity in diversity -- that is, diversity in function, but unity of purpose and control. If every body cell were exactly like every other cell, there could be no body; there must be diversity. In the body there are many different kinds of cells which form bone, muscle, connecting tissue, blood, skin, cartilage, nerves, brain, and numerous organs, glands, and members. Yet in the midst of this diversity, there is no division, no difference of opinion, no disobedience or rebellion in the body. Every member and organ obeys the same will, the same law. The right leg does not lead the body one way while the left tries to go another. Is this true of all the believers in Christ?

There is no jealousy of one part for another in the body. The stomach does not try to keep all the food for itself, but digests it and sends it out in the blood stream to be shared by the tiniest, remotest cell. The lungs do not attempt

to keep all the oxygen they breathe, but send it out to be shared. There is care and concern by every part for every other part, just as there is mutual dependence of each part upon every other part. Without the parts, the body could not exist; and without the body, the parts could not continue to exist. The weaker members of the body receive as much care-- and sometimes more -- than the stronger members.

Does the church -- the body of Christ -- consist of all the believers in Christ? There are 250 Christian denominations in the United States. They are not united in faith, in doctrine, in organization, in authority, in forms of worship, in sacraments, in ordinances, or in scriptural interpretation. There is no functional relationship between these many denominations. Indeed, there is no organization or functional relationship between the several independent congregations which comprise many of these denominations. In spite of much progress towards church unity, there is still jealousy and rivalry between denominations. The larger do not share, or manifest much concern for the smaller. How then can the whole body of Christian believers constitute the body of Christ?

A third point to be considered is that there can be no functional relationship between parts, members, or organs that were not designed to function together. A spark plug, designed for a gasoline engine, will not function in a steam engine. Animal tissue grafted into the human body is rejected. Even human blood must be carefully typed before it is used in a transfusion, lest the wrong type kill the patient. Food which in its original state is incompatible with the body must be transformed by the processes of digestion before it can be endowed with the life of the body. In the same way, all nominal believers in Christ are not compatible material for the body of Christ. Many who believe still need to be born again, to be transformed through the processes of repentance, baptism, and laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, which are the processes set in the body of Christ for processing new members into the kind of material which the body can absorb and use.

A fourth point of similarity between the church and the human body is that if one or more important members are lacking, the body is incomplete, imperfect, and handicapped in its functions. A body which lacks important members or organs may be able to survive, as other members or organs take over the missing functions.

Men can live without arms, without legs, without eyes, without ears, but such persons are handicapped. So in the church which is the body of Christ, we should expect to find a full complement of the officers which God set in the church in the beginning -- such officers as apostles, prophets, seventies, evangelists, bishops, elders, priests, teachers, and deacons. A church might get along without some of these, but would it be a perfect, complete, and efficient "body of Christ?"

It is worth noticing too that this perfect organization, this functional relationship between the several organs and members of the body is as permanent as the body itself. The pattern for the complete and perfect body exists in the germ cells from which it grows. At birth, the pattern is complete. The baby has exactly the same number and kind of organs and members, the same structural relationships, the same variety of cells, as the adult-- even to embryo teeth which appear in due time. Of course there will be change, as old cells die and are replaced; and there will be growth, as new cells are added; but the organization or structure of the body, and the functional relationships between the various organs and members remains the same for life. The church which is the body of Christ will have today the same organic structure, the same officers, the same functions, the same functional relationships between officers and members, as did the infant church. To say that the infant church needed apostles and prophets, but that the adult church today does not, is like saying that a baby needs arms, or heart, or lungs, or stomach, but not an adult -- that after the baby gets a good start he can start discarding unneeded organs or members.

Are you a part of the body of Christ? Does his life dwell in you, ordering every thought, every act, permeating every wish and desire? Is there a close functional relationship between you and the Christ, between yourself and your church, between the officers and members of your church? Is there inspired and prophetic leadership which you are glad to follow? Does your church have all the officers God set in the church so that all the functions of the body of Christ can be performed? If your answers to any of these questions are unsatisfactory, we invite you to learn more about the beliefs, organization, and ordinances of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, and the spiritual dividends which accompany membership in the body of Christ.